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# ROMANS 12

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

| UBS[4] | NKJV | NRSV | TEV | NJB |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| The New Life in Christ | Living Sacrifices to God | The Consecrated Life | Life in God's Service | Spiritual Worship |
| 12:1-2 | 12:1-8 | 12:1-2 | 12:1-2 | 12:1-2 |
| | | | | Humility and Charity |
| 12:3-8 | | 12:3-8 | 12:3-8 | 12:3-13 |
| Rules of the Christian Life | Behave Like a Christian | Exhortations | | |
| 12:9-21 | 12:9-21 | 12:9-13 | 12:9-13 | Charity to Everyone Including Enemies |
| | | 12:14-21 | 12:14-16 | 12:14-21 |
| | | | 12:17-21 | |
| | (20) | | | |

**READING CYCLE THREE (see "Bible Interpretation Seminar")**
***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO ROMANS 12:1-8

A. This begins the practical section of Romans (Rom. 12:1-15:13). Paul's letters were occasional documents, therefore, they have both doctrinal and application sections. Paul wrote to address a specific place and purpose (i.e., the Roman church). Since Romans 1-8 is such a wonderful doctrinal summary, its ethical and practical section is equally powerful.

B. Theology without lifestyle application is not of God (cf. Matt. 7:24-27; John 13:17; Rom. 2:13; James 1:22, 25; 2:14-26). Paul clearly teaches a free salvation by the grace of God through faith in Jesus, but this free gift is meant to radically change our lives! Salvation is free, but it must be followed by a radical Christlikeness! We dare not separate justification from sanctification!

C. Verses 1-2 form an introduction to the entire practical section. It is the basis for the Spirit-led life (i.e., Romans 8).

D. Verses 3-8 discuss spiritual giftedness. Our total yieldedness to Christ must issue in service for God (cf. Deut. 6:4-5; Matt. 22:37) and to others (cf. Lev. 19:18; Matt. 19:19; 1 John 3:16). These gifts emphasize our unity in Christ and our diverse giftedness (cf. Eph. 4:1-10). Believers must strive for unity, not uniformity. We are equipped by God to serve each other (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7,11; Eph. 4:11-13)!

**WORD AND PHRASE STUDY**

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 12:1-2**

**[1]Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which* is your spiritual service of worship. [2]And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.**

**12:1 "Therefore"** Paul used this term at significant transitional points in his presentation of gospel truths in the book of Romans.

1. in Rom. 5:1ff it summed up "justification by faith"
2. in Rom. 8:1ff it summed up believers' relationship to sin, which was called sanctification
3. in Rom. 12:1ff it relates to the practical outworking of justification and sanctification in believers' daily lives

▣

| | |
|---|---|
| **NASB** | **"I urge you"** |
| **NKJV, Peshitta** | **"I beseech you"** |
| **NRSV, TEV** | **"I appeal to you"** |
| **NJB** | **"I beg you"** |
| **REB** | **"I implore you"** |

This phrase is both tender and tough. It is a call to appropriate living. Paul often uses this term (cf. Rom. 12:1;15:30; 16:17; 1 Cor. 1:10; 4:16; 16:15; 2 Cor. 2:8; 5:20; 6:1; 10:1; 12:8; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 4:2; 1 Thess. 4:10; 1 Tim. 1:3; Philemon 9-10).

▣ **"brethren"** Paul often uses this term to

1. introduce a new subject
2. identify with his hearers/readers as parts of the whole Christian community

▣ **"by the mercies of God"** In the LXX this describes the compassionate nature of YHWH (cf. Exod. 34:6). Here it refers to the doctrinal progression of Romans 1-11. There is an obvious emphasis in Romans on the "mercy" (both *oikīeirō* and *eleeō*) of God in dealing with fallen humanity, particularly in Romans 9-11 (cf. Rom. 9:15,16,18,23; 11:30,31,32; 12:8; 15:9). Because God's grace and mercy are offered freely, believers must live godly lives (cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:10) out of

gratitude, not merit (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). The new lives (i.e., Col. 3:9,10,12) are meant to turn others to faith in Christ!

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHARACTERISTICS OF ISRAEL'S GOD (OT)

▣ **"to present"** This is an AORIST INFINITIVE. This was one of several sacrificial terms used in this context:

1. sacrifice, Rom. 12:1
2. holy, Rom. 12:1
3. acceptable, Rom. 12:1

This same concept is expressed in a negative sense in Rom. 6:13,16,19. Humans will either give themselves to God or to Satan. As Christ gave Himself uniquely to do the Father's will, even death on a cross, His followers must also emulate His selfless living (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 2:20; 1 John 3:16).

▣ **"your bodies"** Christianity is different from so much of Greek philosophy, which thought the physical body was evil. It is the arena of temptation but it is morally neutral. The term "body" seems to parallel "mind" in Rom. 12:2. Believers need to commit their entire being to God (cf. Deut. 6:5; 1 Cor. 6:20) as they had previously committed it to sin (cf. Romans 6).

▣ **"a living"** This was radically different from the dead offerings of the Jewish or pagan temples (cf. Rom. 6:13; Gal. 2:20).

It must also be differentiated from asceticism (the harsh treatment of the physical body for religious purposes). It is not the body's isolation, punishment or celibacy that is advocated, but an active life of service and Christlike love.

▣ **"and holy sacrifice"** The term "holy" means "set apart for God's service." The focus of this term in this context is on the believer's consecration and availability to be used by God for His purposes.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HOLY

SPECIAL TOPIC: SANCTIFICATION

▣ **"acceptable to God"** This refers to an appropriate offering in the OT (cf. v. 2). This is similar to the concept of "blameless," when used to refer to people (cf. Gen. 6:9; 17:1; Deut. 18:13; Job 1:1).

SPECIAL TOPIC: BLAMELESS, INNOCENT, GUILTLESS, WITHOUT REPROACH

▣

| | |
|---|---|
| **NASB** | **"which is your spiritual service of worship"** |
| **NKJV** | **"which is your reasonable service"** |
| **NRSV** | **"which is your spiritual worship"** |
| **TEV** | **"This is the true worship that you should offer"** |
| **NJB** | **"in a way that is worthy of thinking beings"** |
| **REB** | **"the worship offered by mind and heart "** |
| **Peshitta** | **"by means of reasonable service"** |

This term [*logikos*] is derived from *logizomai,* meaning "to reason" (cf. Mark 11:31; 1 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:8). In this context it could mean rational or reasonable. But the term also was used in a sense of "spiritual," as in 1 Pet. 2:2. The essence seems to be a conscious offering of one's true self versus the dead or ritual offerings of dead sacrificial animals. God wants our lives in love and service to Him, not formalistic procedures that do not impact daily living.

**12:2 "do not be conformed"** This is a PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE (or PRESENT MIDDLE) with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually means to stop an act already in process. There is a contrast to Rom. 12:2 similar to the one in Phil. 2:6-8; between the outward changing form (*schema*, Phil. 2:8) and the inner unchanging essence (*morphe*, Phil. 2:6-7). Believers are exhorted not to continue to be like the changing, fallen world system (the old age of rebellion) of which they are still physically a part, but to be radically changed into Christlikeness (the new age of the Spirit).

▣ **"to this world"** This is literally the term "age." The Jews saw two ages (cf. Matt. 12:32; Mark 10:30; Luke 20:34-35), the current evil age (cf. Gal. 1:4; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2) and the age to come (cf. Matt. 28:20; Heb. 1:3; 1 John 2:15-17). Believers live in the tension-filled time in which these ages have surprisingly been overlapped. Because of the two comings of Christ, believers live in the "already and not yet" tension of the Kingdom of God as both present and yet future.

SPECIAL TOPIC: *KOSMOS* (WORLD)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME

▣ **"be transformed"** Believers must be transformed (cf. Rom. 6:4; 7:6; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:10), not just informed! The grammatical form of this term can be

1. PRESENT MIDDLE IMPERATIVE, "continue to transform yourselves"
2. PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE, "continue to be transformed"
3. This is also true of "conform" in Rom. 12:2a

For a similar contrast compare Ezek. 18:31 (human commitment and action) with Ezek 36:26-27 (divine gift). Both are needed!

A form of this same word for "formed" is used of Jesus at the Transfiguration (cf. Matt. 17:2), where His true essence was revealed. This true divine essence (cf. 2 Pet. 1:3-4) is to be formed in every believer (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:13).

▣ **"by the renewing of your mind"** This is from the Greek root for new in quality (*kainos*) not new in time (*chronos*). For the Jews the senses of sight and hearing were the windows of the soul. What one thinks about, one becomes. After salvation, because of the indwelling Spirit, believers have a new perspective (cf. Eph. 4:13,23; Titus 3:5). This new biblical worldview, along with the indwelling Spirit, is what transforms the mind and lifestyle of new believers. Believers look at reality in a totally different way because their minds have been energized by the Spirit. A new redeemed, Spirit-led mind results in a new lifestyle! This is what the new covenant promised (cf. Jer. 31:31-34).

SPECIAL TOPIC: RENEW (ANAKAINŌSIS)

▣ **"that you may prove what the will of God is"** This is a PRESENT INFINITIVE. The word (*dokimazō*) is used with the connotation of "to test with a view toward approval."
SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK TERMS FOR TESTING

The will of God is that all be saved through Christ (cf. John 6:39-40), and then live like Christ (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19, Eph. 1:4; 4:13,15; 5:17-18). Christian assurance is based on

1. the promises of a trustworthy God
2. the indwelling Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:14-16)
3. believer's changed and changing life (cf. James and 1 John) "no fruit, no root" (cf. Matt. 13:1-9, 19-23)

SPECIAL TOPIC: ASSURANCE

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE

▣ **"what the will of God is"** See SPECIAL TOPIC: THE WILL (*thelēma*) OF GOD

▣ **"that which is good and acceptable and perfect"** These represent God's will for believers after salvation (cf. Phil. 4:4-9). God's goal for every believer is Christlike maturity now (cf. Matt. 5:48).

▣ **"perfect"** This term means "mature, fully equipped to accomplish an assigned task," "ripe" or "complete" (cf. 1 Cor. 14:20; Eph. 4:13; Col. 1:28). It does not mean "sinless." It was used of

1. arms and legs that had been broken but were healed and restored to usefulness
2. fishing nets that had torn but were mended and useful for catching fish again
3. baby chickens now old enough to go to market as fryers
4. ships rigged for sailing

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 12:3-8**

**[3]For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. [4]For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, [5]so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. [6]Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;[7]if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; [8]or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.**

**12:3** Verses 1-2 accentuate the need for a "new mind." In Rom. 12:3 there is a fourfold play on the word "think." In *The Zondervan Study Guide Commentary, Romans,* Bruce Corley and Curtis Vaughan make this observation:

> "Exaggerated thinking. . .proper thinking. . .purposeful thinking. . .sober thinking" (p. 138).

This characterization is helpful.

This verse, like Rom. 11:13-24, may reflect

1. the tension in the church of Rome between believing Jews and believing Gentiles
2. the fact that Paul wrote Romans from Corinth (at the end of his third missionary journey), where he encountered arrogant, self-flaunting believers

▣ **"For through the grace given to me"** This is an AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. The grace came from God in a past, complete event (i.e., the Damascus road encounter). In this context "grace" related to spiritual giftedness (cf. Rom. 15:15; 1 Cor. 3:10; 15:10; Gal. 2:9; Eph. 3:7-8), not the gift of righteousness (cf. Romans 4). This refers to Paul's conversion and call to be apostle to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17; Rom. 1:1,5; 11:13; 15:16; Gal. 1:15-16; 2:7-8; Eph. 3:1-2,8; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 4:17).

▣ **"I say to everyone among you"** The warning of Rom. 12:3 is for all Christians, not just leaders.

▣ **"not to think more highly of himself"** This is a human problem, post Genesis 3.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S USE OF *HUPER* COMPOUNDS

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE FALL OF MANKIND

▣ **"as God has allotted to each"** This is an AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE. Believers do not choose their spiritual gifts (cf. 1 Cor. 7:17; 12:11; Eph. 4:7). They are given by the Spirit at salvation for the common good (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7). The gifts of the Spirit are not merit badges which exalt the individual, but servant towels so that each believer may serve the body of Christ, the church.

▣ **"a measure of faith"** This referred to one's ability to function effectively in their spiritual giftedness (cf. Rom. 12:6). To be healthy, spiritual giftedness must be exercised by means of the fruit of the Spirit (cf. Rom. 12:9-12; Gal. 5:22-23). The gifts are the ministries of Jesus divided among His followers, while the fruit is the mind of Christ. Both are necessary for effective ministry.

**12:4 "many members in one body"** This is common imagery in Paul's writings. The human body's interdependence describes the church's giftedness (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 1:23; 4:4,12,16; 5:30; Col. 1:18,24; 2:19). Christianity is corporate and individual!

SPECIAL TOPIC: BIBLICAL FAITH IS CORPORATE

**12:5 "we, who are many, are one body in Christ"** This verse emphasizes believers' unity and diversity (cf. 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4). This is the tension of spiritual giftedness within the church. The love chapter of 1 Corinthians 13 discusses the tension of the diversity of giftedness (cf. 1 Cor. 12 and 14). Christians are not in competition, but in Great Commission cooperation (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8)!

**12:6-8** These verses form one sentence in Greek with two PARTICIPLES but no main VERB. It is usually translated as a THIRD PERSON IMPERATIVE, "let us use."

**12:6 "gifts. . .grace"** The terms "gifts" (*charismata*) and "grace" (*charis*) have the same Greek root, which means "freely given." See note at Rom. 3:24. The gifts of the Spirit are listed in 1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12; Ephesians 4 and 1 Peter 4. The lists and their order are not identical, therefore, they must be representative, not exhaustive. The Bible never informs believers how to identify their spiritual gift(s). The best non-biblical Christian wisdom on this issue is found in the principles contained in the InterVarsity Press' booklet by Paul Little called *Affirming the Will of God*. These same guidelines for knowing God's will function in knowing one's area of effective service. Apparently knowing that believers are gifted is more important than identifying how they are gifted or which specific gift they have been given.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR HOW BELIEVERS CAN KNOW THEIR SPIRITUAL GIFT

▣ **"if"** This is *eite* (cf. Rom. 12:6,7 [twice], 8), which is translated "if. . .if" or "whether. . .whether" in meaning. It is followed by no VERB in this verse (cf. 1 Cor. 3:22; 8:5; 2 Cor. 5:10), but often is followed by a PRESENT INDICATIVE (cf. 1 Cor. 12:26; 2 Cor. 1:6) and is, therefore, a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which assumes the existence of these spiritual gifts.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK GRAMMATICAL TERMS, VII

▣ **"prophecy"** This does not relate to OT prophecy as revelatory (inspired) messages from God. In the OT prophets wrote Scripture (inspiration). In the NT it is the act of proclaiming God's truth. It can also involve prediction (cf. Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11). The focus is not on new content but explaining the gospel message and how it applies today. There is a fluidity in the term. It can refer to a function exercised by believers, (cf. 1 Cor. 14:1,39) and a specific spiritual gift (cf. 1 Cor. 12:28; 14:29; Eph. 4:11). This same fluidity can be seen in Paul's Corinthian letters which were written about the same time (cf. 1 Cor. 12:10,12; 13:8; 14:1, 5,29,39).

SPECIAL TOPIC: PROPHECY (NT)

SPECIAL TOPIC: PROPHECY (OT)

▣ **"according to the proportion of his faith"** This relates directly to Rom. 12:3, "as God has allotted to each a measure of faith" (cf. Eph. 4:7). It must also relate to the larger context which has to do with how believers use their giftedness. This relates to believers' attitudes, motives, and energy in functioning in their God-given personal ministries, which are basically the fruit of the Spirit listed in Gal. 5:22-23.

| **12:7** | |
|---|---|
| **NASB** | **"if service, in his serving"** |
| **NKJV, NRSV** | **"or ministry, let us use it in our ministry"** |
| **TEV** | **"if it is to serve, we should serve"** |
| **NJB, REB** | **"if administration, then use it for administration"** |
| **Peshitta** | **"the gift of administration, in their ministry"** |

Modern translations differ because there is no exact English equivalent to this Greek term (*diakonia*). It can mean (1) practical service or (2) administration (cf. Acts 6:1; 1 Cor. 12:5,28). *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised* by Harold K Moulton, defines it as "a function, ministry, or office" in Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:5; Col. 4:17; 2 Tim. 4:5" (p. 92). The contextual focus is on helping other believers.

▣ **"teachers. . .teaching"** This gift (*didaskō*) is

1. listed separately in 1 Cor. 12:28 and 14:26
2. linked with prophets in Acts 13:1
3. with pastors in Eph. 4:11

The early church saw these as gifted people functioning in overlapping ways. Preaching, prophesying, evangelizing, and teaching all proclaim the gospel, but with different emphases and methodologies.

**12:8 "exhorts. . .exhortation"** This term (*parakaleō*) is related to teaching (cf. 1 Tim. 4:13). Possibly it is the skill by which truth is applied to life. It then would relate to Eph. 4:15,16, "speaking the truth in love. . .the body building itself up in love."

▣ **"he who gives, with liberality"** See SPECIAL TOPIC: GENEROUS/SINCERE *(HAPLOTES)*

▣ **"he who leads, with diligence"** This refers to Christian leadership, either itinerant or local.

▣ **"he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness"** This refers to helping the sick and needy. There should be no distinction between the doctrinal preaching and social concerns of the believing community. They are two sides of one coin. There is no "social gospel," just gospel!

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is involved in presenting your body as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1)?
2. Does every believer have a spiritual gift (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:7)? If so, does he or she pick which one they want?
3. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts?
4. Is there an exhaustive list of gifts in the Bible?

5. How does one identify his gift?

**CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO ROMANS 12:9-21**

A. This section could best be entitled "Christian Guidelines for Interpersonal Relationships." This is a practical discussion of love (cf. Matt. 5-7; 1 Cor. 13 and 1 John 3:18; 4:7-21).

B. Romans 12 is very similar in content and structure to 1 Corinthians 12-13. Immediately after the discussion of spiritual gifts comes a warning about pride and an emphasis on practical lifestyle love.

C. The context deals with
   1. our relations with other Christians (cf. Rom. 12:9-13). This is also discussed in detail in Rom. 14:1-15:13 and in 1 Cor. 8:11ff; 10:23-33
   2. our relations with unbelievers or even more probably, other Christians with whom there is a conflict (cf. Rom. 12:14-21). This section seems to reflect Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt. 5-7).
   3. this division of the passage is somewhat artificial because these areas (relationships) overlap

D. This passage is dominated by ongoing, lifestyle commands (PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVES, cf. Rom. 12:4 [thrice], 16, 20 [twice], 21 [twice] and by PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLES used in the sense of IMPERATIVES seventeen times). Salvation is a free gift of the grace of God through the finished work of Christ and the wooing of the Spirit, but once received, it is a costs-everything commitment and lifestyle! Calling Jesus "Lord" is not imagery (cf. Luke 6:46)!

E. This passage also has several PREENT PARTICIPLES used in the sense of IMPERATIVES with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually means to stop an act already in process, Rom. 12:14, 16 (twice), 17, 19 and 21. Christians were already living out of bounds! In one sense sin can be defined as taking God's gifts beyond their God-given bounds.

F. Christianity must be "open"—open-minded, open-handed, open-hearted and open-doored (cf. James 2).

**WORD AND PHRASE STUDY**

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 12:9-13**

**9*Let* love *be* without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. 10*Be* devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; 11not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, 13contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.**

**12:9 "*Let* love *be* without hypocrisy"** In the Greek text there were no linking words (*asyndeton*) in this context which was very unusual in Koine Greek. It might reflect the Hebrew grammatical form behind the Beatitudes of Matthew 5. This grammatical form would emphasize each one of the phrases as a stand-alone truth.

"Hypocrisy" was a theatrical term for "speaking behind a mask." Love must not be play acting or counterfeit (cf. 2 Cor. 6:6). Love is the characteristic of believers (cf. John 13:34-35; 15:12,17; 1 John 3:11,18; 4:7-21) because it is the character of God.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HYPOCRITES

▣ **"abhor what is evil"** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE. Believers need to be surprised and revolted by evil (cf. 1 Thess. 5:21-22). Often we are only surprised by the consequences that directly impact our lives.

▣

| | |
|---|---|
| **NASB, NKJV** | **"cling to what is good"** |
| **NRSV, Peshitta** | **"hold fast to what is good"** |
| **TEV** | **"hold on to what is good"** |
| **NJB** | **"stick to what is good"** |
| **REB** | **"holding fast to the good"** |

This is a PRESENT PASSIVE (but used in a MIDDLE sense) PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE—"be glued to" (cf. LXX of Gen. 2:24; Acts 8:29 and also Phil. 4:8; 1 Thess. 5:21-22). Notice the necessity of diligence and perseverance!

| **12:10** | |
|---|---|
| **NASB** | **"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love"** |
| **NKJV, Peshitta** | **"Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love"** |
| **NRSV** | **"Love one another with mutual affection"** |
| **TEV** | **"Love one another warmly as Christians"** |
| **NJB** | **"Love each other as much as brothers should"** |
| **REB** | **"Let love of the Christian commnity show itself in mutual affection"** |

This was a compound Greek term (*phileō* + *storge*) combining "brotherly love" with "family love" and is used only here in the NT. Christians are a family. We are commanded to love one another (cf. 1 Thess. 4:9).

This is the first of a series of DATIVES which were placed first in the Greek sentence for emphasis.

▣

| | |
|---|---|
| **NASB** | **"give preference to one another in honor"** |
| **NKJV, Peshitta** | **"in honor giving preference to one another"** |
| **NRSV** | **"outdo one another in showing honor"** |
| **TEV** | **"and be eager to show respect for one another"** |
| **NJB** | **"have a profound respect for each other"** |
| **REB** | **"esteem others more highly than yourself"** |

This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE. Believers must treat other covenant partners as more important than themselves (cf. Eph. 4:2; Phil. 2:3).

| **12:11** | |
|---|---|
| **NASB** | **"not lagging behind in diligence"** |
| **NKJV** | **"not lagging in diligence"** |
| **NRSV** | **"do not lag in zeal"** |
| **TEV** | **"work hard and do not be lazy"** |
| **NJB** | **"work for the Lord with untiring effort"** |

**REB "with unflagging zeal"**
**Peshitta "not slothful in business"**

True love produces great energy (cf. Gal. 6:9).

▣

**NASB, NKJV, Peshitta "fervent in spirit"**
**NRSV "ardent in spirit"**
**TEV "with a heart full of devotion"**
**NJB "with great earnestness of spirit"**
**REB "aglow with the Spirit"**

This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE. It is literally "to boil." This could refer to the regenerated human spirit or the indwelling Holy Spirit (RSV, cf. Acts 18:25; Rev. 3:15-16).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SPIRIT IN THE NT

▣ **"serving the Lord"** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE. There is a manuscript variation here. Some of the western family of Greek manuscripts (MSS $D^{*,3}$, F, and G) read "in time" (*kairos*) instead of "in the Lord" (*kurios*). The variant would emphasize serving the Lord and His church as the opportunity arises (cf. John 9:4; Eph. 5:16).

In all probability the confusion occurred because *kurios* was misunderstood or misread. The best and oldest Greek manuscripts $P^{46}$, א, A, and B have "serving the Lord." The $UBS^4$ rates "Lord" as "certain" (A).

SPECIAL TOPIC: LORD (*adon* and *kurios*)

**12:12 "rejoicing in hope"** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE (cf. Rom. 5:2).

The term "hope" was often used in connection with the Second Coming (cf. Rom. 5:2; 8:24; 15:13; 1 Thess. 5:8). It is not hope in the English sense of a wish, but in the NT sense of a certain event, but with an ambiguous time element. See full notes at Rom. 4:18 and 5:2.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HOPE

▣ **"persevering"** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE. The term means "active, voluntary, steadfast endurance."

▣ **"in tribulation"** As in Rom. 5:3,5 "hope" was linked to tribulation (*thlipsis*). This is the norm for followers of Christ in a fallen world (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; John 16:1-3; 17:14; Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3-4; 8:17; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; 6:3-10; 11:23-30; Phil. 1:29; 1 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:12; James 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 4:12-16). We must not seek it nor shun it!

SPECIAL TOPIC: TRIBULATION

▣ **"devoted to prayer"** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE. Prayer is a spiritual discipline and gift that recognizes God's active hand in history. Believers can affect a loving Heavenly Father. God has chosen to limit Himself to the prayers of His children (cf. Acts 1:14; 2:42; 6:4; Eph. 6:18-19; Col. 4:2; James 4:2). This makes prayer an awesome responsibility. See *Three Crucial Questions About Spiritual Warfare* by Clinton Arnold, pp. 43-44, 187-188.

SPECIAL TOPIC: EFFECTIVE PRAYER

| 12:13 | |
|---|---|
| NASB, NRSV, REB | "contributing to the needs of the saints" |
| NKJV | "distributing to the needs sof the saints" |
| TEV | "share your belongings with your needy fellow Christians" |
| NJB | "share with any of God's holy people who are in need" |
| Peshitta | "Distributing to the necessity of saints" |

The Greek VERB *koinōneō* means "fellowship with." This term has a wide range of meaning for Paul. It includes both fellowship in the gospel and physical needs (cf. Gal. 6:6). It is even used of sharing Christ's suffering (cf. Phil. 3:8-10; 1 Pet. 4:13) and Paul's (cf. Phil. 4:14). To be united with Christ meant to be united with His people at every level!

This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE (cf. Prov. 3:27; Gal. 6:10). Believers are to work hard so as to have more to share with others, in Jesus' name (cf. 2 Cor. 8:11-12; Eph. 4:28).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SAINTS

SPECIAL TOPIC: KOINŌNIA

▣ **"practicing hospitality"** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE. It is literally "pursuing hospitality" (see note at Rom. 14:19, cf. 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9). This ministry was extremely important in the early church because of the evil reputation of "inns." This primarily referred to the housing and feeding itinerant Christian ministers.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 12:14-21**

**14Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. 17Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. 18If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. 19Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath *of God*, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. 20"BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD." 21Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

**12:14 "bless those who persecute you"** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE used twice in this verse. We get the English term "eulogy" from this term, "bless" (cf. Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:28; 1 Cor. 4:12; James 3:9-12; 1 Pet. 3:9). In $P^{46}$ (The Chester Beatty Papyri) and manuscript B (Vaticanus), "you" is left out making the statement much more inclusive or to put it another way, a much more general statement. The $UBS^4$ gives its inclusion a "C" rating because the committee reasoned that scribes tried to make it parallel to Matt. 5:44 and Luke 6:28.

For "persecute" see note at Rom. 14:9.

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHY DO CHRISTIANS SUFFER?

SPECIAL TOPIC: TEXTUAL CRITICISM

▣ **"do not curse"** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means to stop an act already in process. This refers to calling God's name

in prayer for vengeance (similar to the curses of 1 Cor. 12:3). This does not refer to the use of profanity (cf. Eph. 4:29; 1 Pet. 3:9).

**12:15 "rejoice with those people who rejoice, and weep with those who weep"** These two PRESENT INFINITIVES are used in the sense of IMPERATIVES. Christians are a family. Believers are not in competition, but must treat each other in family love. Because of the context of Rom. 12:14-21 it is even possible that this reflects the believer's response to the unbelieving community using cultural opportunities or circumstances for evangelistic opportunities.

| **12:16** | |
|---|---|
| **NASB, NKJV, Peshitta** | **"Be of the same mind toward one another"** |
| **NRSV** | **"Live in harmony with one another"** |
| **TEV** | **"Have the same concern for everyone"** |
| **NJB** | **"Treat everyone with equal kindness"** |
| **REB** | **"Live in agreement with one another"** |

This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE (cf. Rom. 15:5; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 2:2). Verse 16 may be viewed in relation to the conflict between

1. believing Jews and believing Gentiles in the Roman Church (cf. Rom. 11:13-24)
2. the age-old conflict between economic classes
3. the differing spiritual gifts
4. generational traditions and personal preferences

▣ **"do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly"** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means to stop an act already in process.

The term "lowly" can be MASCULINE or NEUTER.

1. if it is NEUTER then the translation should read "accept humble duties"
2. if MASCULINE, "associate with poor or humble people"

▣ **"Do not be wise in your own estimation"** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means stop an act already in process (cf. Prov. 3:7; Isa. 5:21; 1 Cor. 10:12; Gal. 6:3). Believers must not act superior to each other or arrogantly toward the unbelieving community. Again, this may reflect the tension in the church at Rome between Jewish and Gentile leadership.

**12:17 "Never pay back evil for evil to anyone"** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which meant stop an act already in process. It is up to God to set things straight, not believers (cf. Prov. 20:22; 24:29; Matt. 5:38-48; Luke 6:27; 1 Thess. 5:15; 1 Pet. 3:9).

▣ **"Respect what is right in the sight of all men"** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE (cf. 2 Cor. 8:21; 1 Thess. 5:22; and 1 Tim. 3:7). This may be an allusion to Prov. 3:4 in the Septuagint (LXX). Believers live with an eye toward evangelizing unbelievers. We should do nothing that would offend or alienate an unbeliever (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23). Even our deepest convictions must be expressed in loving ways.

**12:18 "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men"** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. It is followed in the next clause by a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE. This is not always the believer's choice, but the grammar implies that it is often possible (cf. Mark 9:50; 2 Cor. 13:11; 1 Thess. 5:13).

**12:19 "Never take your own revenge"** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE, which usually means stop an act already in process.

God will set it straight one day (cf. Lev. 19:18; Deut. 32:35; Heb. 10:30).

▣ **"for it is written"** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE, which is a Semitic idiomatic way of referring to inspired Scripture. This idiom of inspiration is paralleled to "as the Lord says" (cf. 1 Cor. 14:21 and 2 Cor. 6:17). This is a quote from Deut. 32:35.

SPECIAL TOPIC: INSPIRATION

**12:20 "But if your enemy"** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which meant potential future action. Enemies will come!

▣ **"heap burning coals on his head"** This is an allusion to Prov. 25:21-22. The theories of interpretation are:

1. This was a cultural idiom possibly from Egypt which meant that kindness is the best way to turn an enemy into a friend. It is still the Christian response to entrenched evil (cf. Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:27-28).
2. "Burning coals" may represent shame at one's improper actions which are so clearly revealed in light of another's love and forgiveness (cf. Ambrosiaster, Augustine and Jerome).
3. Origen and Chrysostom said this refers to Christian kindness which causes God to judge even more severely the unrepentant (cf. the *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 326).

All the above theories are just that. The key is in Paul's summary statement in Rom. 12:21.

**12:21 "Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good"** This is a PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE and PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. Our response to unfair treatment will determine and reflect the level of our own inner peace and joy. Bitterness is a spiritual cancer. Believers must give it to God.

▣ **"evil"** This is either MASCULINE and, therefore, a reference to the evil one, or it could be NEUTER and refer to evil in general (cf. Rom. 12:9; 1 Thess. 5:21-22). This is a common NT ambiguity (cf. Matt. 5:37; 6:13; 13:19,28; John 17:15; 2 Thess. 3:3; 1 John 2:13-14; 3:12; 5:18-19).

It must be remembered that the purpose of these new attitudes and actions is evangelism!

SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ROMANS 12:9-21**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why are there so many PRESENT IMPERATIVES with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE in vv. 9-21?
2. List all of the commands in these verses separately in a column. They are an awesome list of what practical, daily Christlikeness involves!
3. Why is it so difficult to determine which verses refer to Christians' treatment of other believers and which refer to their treatment of unbelievers?

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